

Hall's Veterans' Subcommittee Holding Hearing on VA's Backlog Approaching One Million Claims *Washington, DC* – With backlogged claims at the Department of Veteran's Affairs approaching a record one million, U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-Dover) is leading his House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance tomorrow to investigate why the backlog is so big and what the VA can do to make applying for benefits easier and quicker for veterans.

"It is a disgrace that we ask the men and women of our Armed Forces to be ready to defend America at a moment's notice, and then force them to wait months to receive the assistance they've earned through service and sacrifice," said Hall. "These veterans do not deserve to have their requests for assistance languish as one in a million in the VA's bureaucracy."

Last year, Congressman Hall passed into law legislation to modernize the VA's disability claims processing system. This law requires, among other provisions, for VA to modernize its disability claims processing system by:

- authorizing temporary ratings and claimant substitution,
- studying veterans' loss of earnings and quality of life,
- creating a Disability Compensation Advisory Committee,
- piloting programs to expedite fully developed claims and a checklist,
- assessing quality assurance independently,
- certifying and training VBA employees,
- evaluating performance measures for claims adjudication,
- reviewing and enhancing information technology capabilities, and
- improving access to medical advice.

Tomorrow's hearing will investigate the VA's progress on implementing Congressman Hall's bill. Despite Congressman Hall's legislation requiring a review and enhancement of the VA's internet technology (IT) capabilities, VA still operates on a paper based system where a veteran must send in a claim via hard mail. These claims are then processed manually and can be lost or shuffled around. Chairman Hall will be asking about IT implementation and updates within the VA and how soon will this paper based system turn digital so that cases will no longer be lost and can be handled more rapidly. "Veterans returning home from war with mental and physical wounds are still faced with an overburdened, bureaucratic and adversarial VA," said Hall. "America's veterans deserve a quick, responsive, veteran-friendly, 21st Century VA that helps them get the treatment and benefits they have earned through service to our country. No American veteran should have to wait months, years, and in some cases even decades to receive help from the VA."

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